



Presidential Awards for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching

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News Release

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Local Teacher Recognized for Outstanding Teaching Innovation

Mathematics Teacher from Madison Meadows School Selected as 2005 Presidential Award State Finalist

Awardees Announced in March 2006

Washington, DC – Did your teacher ever take you to a theme park or use a model of a rollercoaster to teach physics concepts in class, allow you to learn fractions and angles by building a gingerbread house, or measure force and motion on the basketball court? Highly qualified science and mathematics teachers bring these types of lessons to life for their students. One of these remarkable teachers, Paula Schmitt, a Mathematics teacher at Madison Meadows School in Phoenix, is being rewarded for her success in using innovative methods and strategies in her classroom. Schmitt has been named a state finalist for the 2005 Presidential Awards for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching (PAEMST), the nation's highest honor for K-12 teaching in these fields.

Established by Congress in 1983, and administered for the White House by the National Science Foundation, the Presidential Awards allow for each state to select up to three mathematics and three science teachers as state finalists. From this field of state finalists, a maximum of 108 Presidential Awardees are selected representing the 50 states and four U.S. jurisdictions. Recipients of the 2005 Presidential Awards will be announced during a week of celebration events in March 2006 in Washington, DC.

When Schmitt was told she was a state finalist, she said, "I was shocked and excited. I was nominated by my school district, and it is an honor to be recognized."

Schmitt is one of the 253 state finalists for the prestigious Presidential Award. Her teaching style is key to her success in the classroom. "Although students often view my task as that of helping them master mathematical facts, I strive to change their image of my role to that of a facilitator of their learning," said Schmitt. "In this process, both the students and I have a responsibility for the learning that takes place. We engage together in the exploration of significant mathematical issues that build toward the development of an understanding of mathematics as a system."

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“Presidential Awardees represent exceptional professional models of what we are looking for in science and mathematics teachers. They are highly qualified in their fields, deeply knowledgeable about their subjects, and equipped with the methods and strategies that improve teaching and learning in science and mathematics,” said Celeste Pea, Ph.D., Program Director of Elementary, Secondary, and Informal Education programs at the National Science Foundation. “They strive to provide opportunities for their students to reach their potential in their respective schools and communities. Through this recognition, we hope to motivate similar creativity in other teachers, and to attract new recruits to the mathematics and science teaching profession.”

“I decided to become a teacher because I enjoy working with students and I vividly remember my 8th grade teachers and the impact they had on me. I love to do math and solve problems and that makes teaching it all the more fun,” said Schmitt when asked about why she became a teacher.

The goal of the Presidential Awards is to identify and recognize highly qualified teachers. As part of the recognition process, Awardees will take part in a weeklong series of networking and professional development activities in Washington, DC. In addition, each Awardee will also receive \$10,000 from the National Science Foundation. For more information about PAEMST, see forms and instructions available at: www.paemst.org.